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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the differences of third grade students' reading achievement who have experienced the Reading Renaissance approach to reading instruction (a comprehensive program that balances a reading curriculum with an intensive regimen of reading practice, proven motivational techniques, and state-of-the-art technology) as compared to third grade students who have received the traditional basal textbook approach to the teaching of reading. The sample was assigned from 2 of 11 classes of third grade students who had been heterogeneously grouped at random by school administrators. The control group was exposed to the traditional basal textbook approach to the teaching of reading while the experimental group was exposed to the Reading Renaissance approach to the teaching of reading. An independent means t-Test was performed on the posttest results and there was a level of significant difference found for the control group. The results of the analysis contradicted the hypothesis that the experimental group would show greater achievement in reading because they were exposed to the Reading Renaissance as compared to the control group who were exposed to the traditional basal textbook approach to reading instruction. Students who received the basal textbook approach to reading instruction showed greater achievement than those students in the experimental group. Results of this and further studies using matched pairs may be used by school administrators for future planning for reading instruction in the elementary school. Contains 53 references and a table of data. (Author/RS)

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EFFECT OF THE READING RENAISSANCE APPROACH OR A TRADITIONAL BASAL APPROACH ON READING ACHIEVEMENT IN THIRD GRADE

by

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B.A., Tift College, 1983

M.Ed., Mercer University, 1991

Research Report Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of Mercer University in Partial Fulfillment

of the

Requirements for the Degree

EDUCATION SPECIALIST

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

page

LIST OF TABLES vii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS viii

ABSTRACT ix

I. INTRODUCTION 1

Statement of the Problem 3

Purpose of the Study 4

Statement of the Hypothesis 4

Definition of Terms 4

Assumptions of the Study 5

Limitations of the Study 5

Significance of the Study 6

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE 7

The Basal Reader Approach 8

The Reading Renaissance Approach 14

Conclusion 23

III. METHODOLOGY 25

Population 25

Sample 26

Instrument 26

Tasks and Materials 26

Design 27

Procedures 27

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION 29

Data Analysis....29
Method of Data Analysis....29
Analysis of Findings....30
Discussion of Findings....30
V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS....31
Summary....31
Conclusions....31
Implications....32
VI. REFERENCES....33

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

1. Post test Scores for Control Group and Experimental Group.....30

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the differences of third grade students' reading achievement who have experienced the Reading Renaissance approach to reading instruction as compared to third grade students who have received the traditional basal textbook approach to the teaching of reading. The sample was assigned from two of eleven classes of third grade students who had been heterogeneously grouped at random by school administrators. The control group was exposed to the traditional basal textbook approach to the teaching of reading while the experimental group was exposed to the Reading Renaissance approach to the teaching of reading. An independent means t-Test was performed on the post test results and there was a level of significant difference found for the control group. The results of the analysis contradicted the hypothesis that the experimental group would show greater achievement in reading because they were exposed to the Reading Renaissance as compared to the control group who were exposed to the traditional basal textbook approach to reading instruction. Results of this and further studies using matched pairs may be used by school administrators for future planning for reading instruction in the elementary school.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

During the past two decades, there have been far-reaching changes in the perception and practice of reading instruction. New understandings about literacy acquisition have resulted in widespread criticism of basal readers with their skill books and phonics lessons. Reading classrooms have become filled with large numbers of trade books. The shift to the use of literature brought about a great appreciation for real books; however, it did at the expense of skills instruction. Teachers then realized that such areas as phonemic awareness, phonics, and reading skills and strategies were critical to producing fluent, independent readers (Baltas & Shafer, 1996). There needed to be a balance between the literature and skills instruction. Examples of reading strategies follow: 1)A reader using context clues to infer the meaning of an unknown word that is central to the comprehension of a passage; 2)A reader looking for main ideas and topic sentences while trying to extract the important ideas from a challenging science textbook selection; and 3)A reader calling up knowledge of the characteristics of historical fiction in order to understand and enjoy a narrative text (Baumann, Hooten, & White, 1996, p.61).

It is widely thought today that a balanced literacy program includes: "1)Reading aloud on a daily basis to students to foster a love of literature; 2)Reading with students using systematic intentional skills and strategies instruction, based on literature; 3)Reading by students to help them achieve independence as readers; and 4)Access to a variety of reading materials, such as fiction and nonfiction, maps, charts, graphs, references, technology, etc." (Reutzel, 1996, p.7). A balanced reading program can only assure that all students receive a well-rounded exposure to good literature, rich language experiences, and systematic skill instruction in reading and writing. Such a program assists children in becoming strategic, socially interactive, competent, and independent readers and writers.

Direct instruction in reading skills and strategies is neither a curse nor a cure, but it simply represents one additional tool that has its place in a balanced reading and language arts program. Direct instruction should be used "wisely, discriminatingly, and in moderation" according to Baumann (1988, p.712)). While skills alone are insufficient to develop good readers, no reader can become proficient without these foundational skills (Every Child a Reader, 1995). Another concern arises from the realization that skilled readers are fluent readers and fluency requires lots and lots of reading practice.

In thousands of schools nationwide, educators are discovering a new approach to making every child a successful reader. This innovative method combines computer technology, literature-based reading, and individualized instruction to achieve dramatic, measurable gains in student reading growth. Reading Renaissance (Advantage Learning Systems, 1996) is a comprehensive program that balances a reading curriculum with an intensive regimen of reading practice, proven motivational techniques, and state-of-the-art technology. Reading research indicates (Taylor, Fry, & Maruyama, 1990; Paul, 1992; Krashen, 1993; Dale & Radell, 1995) that most schools don't give students the reading practice time they need to strengthen their reading skill and fluency. Reading Renaissance provides an effective way of restoring the missing element of reading practice to a reading curriculum through a practical regimen of sustained silent reading which gives the students the practice they need to develop reading fluency; the Accelerated Reader (Paul, 1992), the nation's leading in-school reading software, which motivates students to read, and helps teachers monitor their progress instantly and easily; classroom-tested reading motivation techniques that get even hesitant readers excited about books; sophisticated diagnosis and intervention strategies that help teachers spot student problems as well as students on the way to success; and student monitoring of their own reading progress as they set challenging goals and achieve success while building self-directed learning skills and real self-esteem.

New directions and changes are being made in the perception and practice of reading instruction. For the past several decades, basal reading instruction constituted 75-90% of what was happening in the elementary schools in the United States. Reading in everyday life, which has the power to inform, to enlighten, and to inspire, has been lost for too many Americans since the 1940's. In recent years, the basal reading publishers have adopted a literature-based approach as part of the whole language philosophy which employs real literature with easily discernible patterns of language and content rather the stories that appear so contrived and oversimplified. Basal reading has also been criticized for not allowing for extensive silent reading practice which arises from the realization that skilled readers are fluent readers and that fluency requires lots and lots of reading practice as children are read to, read with, and read independently. Research shows (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Mooney, 1988; Paul, 1992; Dale & Radell, 1995) that practice is an integral part of the acquisition of the reading process and Reading Renaissance is one approach which incorporates this reading practice as children are read to, read with, and read independently. Through Reading Renaissance, as children are read to, read with, and read independently, they begin to see reading as a valuable social skill and as they are allowed to select their own reading material from a vast supply of trade books available on the market at their own reading levels, they are able to progress at their own levels without the negative feelings from being behind everyone else or the superior feelings or boredom from having to wait for others to catch up. The focus of this study will be to investigate whether the use of a balanced approach, such as Reading Renaissance, as the primary model of reading instruction is more effective than the use of the traditional basal approach, the adopted textbook series, as the primary model of reading instruction when used with third grade students.

Statement of the Problem

Is using the Reading Renaissance or a balanced approach as a primary model of reading

instruction for third grade students more effective than teaching reading to third grade students using an adopted, traditional basal series as a primary model of reading instruction?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the differences of third grade students' reading achievement who have experienced the Reading Renaissance instructional approach compared to those third grade students who have experienced the traditional basal textbook approach to reading instruction.

Statement of the Hypothesis

Third grade students who receive reading instruction using Reading Renaissance will score higher on the ITBS reading section than those students receiving traditional basal textbook reading instruction.

Definition of Terms

The following is a list of terms whose definitions are necessary in the understanding of reading instruction.

Reading Renaissance

Reading Renaissance is a comprehensive program that balances your reading curriculum with an intensive regimen of reading practice, proven motivational techniques, and state-of-the-art technology. The Reading Renaissance program has demonstrated impressive results during the two years of development at five pilot schools and in the 14,000 schools that have implemented the program since.

Basal Reading Series

A textbook series advertised as a total reading program which includes student reading materials along with a teacher's manual with detailed lesson plans that help a teacher us the material to its best advantage. These series are designed to be comprehensive, developmental, continuous progress programs providing for the sequential and systematic learning of all reading

skills.

Reading Achievement

Reading achievement refers to the total Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) reading achievement scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills as measured in May of 1996 and May of 1997.

Iowa Test of Basic Skills

The Iowa Test of Basic Skills or (ITBS) is a standardized test developed in the state of Iowa. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills evaluates the areas of Reading and Mathematics achievement.

Assumptions

It is assumed that all students in the study received the same type of reading instruction in previous grades one through two. It is assumed that even though students were enrolled in different classes with different teachers during the previous years, they were taught the same reading content. It is assumed that the school counselor competently selected the heterogeneously matched pairs of subjects for this study in regards to sex, race, and ITBS scores. It is assumed that all teachers participating in the study have comparative years of teaching experience and background. It is further assumed that maturation will not be a factor in this study because both the control group and the experimental group will mature equally over the period of the study. Because the Iowa Test of Basic Skills is a nationally standardized test, it is assumed that the test will be administered to the students within the prescribed procedures. It is also assumed that the Iowa Test of Basic Skills is a valid and reliable test of reading ability and fair to all students.

Limitations of the Study

The only limitation to be addressed is the natural maturation of students from grade to grade as it relates to the teaching styles of the teachers and learning styles of the student

participants. There are two classes with a total of 45 students in the control group and two classes with 48 students in the experimental group.

Significance of the Study

This research should prove to be helpful for local administrators in planning the best curriculum and instructional methods with respect to elementary reading instruction. This research should either confirm that the Reading Renaissance approach is a strong method of reading instruction or stimulate ideas for alternative methods. There presently exist many advocates for a balanced reading approach such as is the case with the Reading Renaissance approach. These balanced reading approaches expose students to reading skills instruction along with much independent reading practice and a good bit of reading to or reading with time. The traditional basal approach continues to allow for much reading skills instruction without the necessary attention given to reading practice and reading to and with time. This study is significant in the respect that the control group teachers followed the traditional basal approach exposing students to much reading skills instruction which leaves little time for actual reading practice and application of these skills.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

For almost a century, the schoolrooms of America have depended on basal readers as their chief resource for helping children learn to read and for providing the reading materials for reading. A true basal reading series consists of both the methods and materials. Those that established the patterns for today's basal series were descended from basal ancestors from as early as the 1840's, when Professor William H. McGuffey presented the world with his brain child, the famous *McGuffey Readers*, more correctly known as *McGuffey's Eclectic Readers* (Aukerman, 1981). McGuffey's instructions to the teachers consisted of only a preface of two pages of explanations and suggestions. It is not surprising that many of his suggestions are still seen paraphrased in most of our teacher's editions today. Other series that appeared after McGuffey's stressed articulation, elocution, oratorical speech, and morality. *McGuffey's Eclectic Readers* survived long after these others were placed on the shelves. It was the *McGuffey Readers, The Bible*, and *Pilgrim's Progress* that rode the covered wagons across the frontiers and the prairies, and together, they shaped the thinking, the morals, the attitudes, the patriotism, and the behavior of pioneer families for many generations (Aukerman, 1981).

One of the most successful series of the turn of the century was *The Elson Readers* published by Scott, Foresman, and Company. These readers which were the forerunners of the famous series and revisions done by the late Dr. William S. Gray, whose story children, Dick and Jane, became the models for the basals of the 1940's, 1950's, and even the 1960's (Aukerman, 1981). Changes in American Society sparked by the Vietnamese War demanded that basal reader authors and editors quickly set about the task of revising their books in keeping up with the times. These changes in American society included a change in the attitudes and morals, behavior, styles of living, verbal expressions, values, ethics, and many others; a change in attitudes toward women; a change in attitudes of women about themselves; an acceptance of the

handicapped as contributing members of society; an awareness of aging and senior citizens and their role in the community and society in general; a questioning of government and political leaders; appreciation of contributions of minority groups; equal rights and women's rights (Aukerman, 1981).

The Basal Reader Approach

For many years, basal reader series have been the most widely used materials for the teaching of reading in the elementary schools of the United States according to Burns (1992). Andersen, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) estimated that between 75% and 90% of what occurs in the name of reading instruction in the United States is based on basal programs. Wiggins (1994) states that although the current figures may be somewhat lower with the trend toward whole language and other forms of literature-based reading instruction, basal reader programs are still a major influence in many elementary schools. Basals begin with prereading materials and provide materials for the development and practice of reading strategies in each grade. These series have generally consisted of one or more readiness books, several preprimers, a primer, a first reader, and one or two readers for each succeeding grade level through grade six or eight. Basal reader series also include workbooks and/or blackline duplicating masters of skill sheets that children can use to reinforce skills and strategies they have previously learned in class. Ekwall (1985) cites in a study that basal readers are designed to be comprehensive, developmental, continuous programs, providing for the sequential and systematic learning of all reading skills. Burns (1992) states that many publishing companies offer other supplementary material to be used in conjunction with basal series such as "big books"; student journals; read-aloud libraries for the teacher; unit tests; puppets to go with some early stories; computer management, reinforcement and/or enrichment activities; and various other items.

In addition to the student materials, basal readers include teacher's manuals with detailed lesson plans that help teachers use the readers to best advantage. Teachers who follow these

plans use what is called a directed reading activity (DRA). According to Burns (1992), some educators believe that the detailed lesson plans offered in the basals tie the teachers down to a specific lesson sequence and release them from exercising personal judgment. One of the most persistent, recent criticisms of basal reading programs is that such materials control or limit the teachers' freedom through a process called "deskilling". According to Baumann and Heubachs (1994) with regards to the deskilling argument, by using basal reading programs, teachers surrender control or responsibility for curricular and instructional decisions in reading to the materials being used, thus abolishing the authority of their previously learned and acquired teaching skills. Shannon (1987) states that the "technical control of reading programs (the commercial reading materials) deskills teachers by supplying the goals, means, and the evaluation of their reading instruction" (p.321). Through the use of a survey Baumann and Heubachs (1994) concluded that "most teachers are discriminating consumers who view basal readers as just one instructional tool available to them as they plan literary lessons" (p.12). This outcome is possible as teachers may and do choose from among the offered suggestions those that fit their students' needs and discard those that are not appropriate.

Types of Basal Reading Programs

In the 1980's basal reader programs fit into two broad categories: (1)the more common "eclectic" or "balanced" basal programs that rely on a core vocabulary and analytic phonics (letters stand for sounds rather than make sounds); and (2)the phonics-based programs. An eclectic or meaning-based program usually emphasizes language development and other readiness skills and then introduces a core vocabulary of words to be learned as sight words. Vocabulary is usually controlled, with words repeated frequently so that students master them. The core vocabulary words are also used to develop phonics skills through an analytic approach. The phonics-based program places a much stronger emphasis on phonics as a decoding skill. According to Ekwall (1985) phonics-based programs may use an analytic approach, a synthetic

method (teaches sounds of letters and then teaches how to decode words by blending letter sounds), or a linguistic approach (emphasizes the regularity of letter-sound associations through consistent spelling patterns).

Today, publishers are moving in a new direction and refer now to their materials as literature-based and language integrated to reflect the new philosophy. These literature-based series offer quality literature selections for students to read. Burns (1992) reports that some series are integrating instruction involving all the language arts into their programs including listening, speaking, and writing activities to accompany the literature selections that make the lessons true communications experiences. Using literature this way is congruent with the whole language philosophy although some literature-based approaches to reading instruction are regarded as too structured by some whole language advocates. A literature based approach places emphasis on connecting the stories to children's personal background knowledge, analyzing stories and selections for particular elements, and monitoring students' understanding of the reading materials. The foundation of a literature-based program must be trade books, books not written primarily for instructional purposes. Henke (1988), Zarillo (1989), and Hiebert and Colt (1989) agree that literature-based programs may be conducted in a number of ways such as whole class reading of a core book; use of literature groups with multiple copies of several books; use of thematic literature units; and individualized reading approaches. A common adjunct to each of these programs, according to Tunnell and Jacobs (1989), is Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) in which students and teachers alike have time to read materials of their own choice without interruption.

When basal series are advertised as total reading programs and teachers accept this assertion uncritically, they fail to provide the variety of experiences that children need for a balanced program. Many teachers form basal reading groups based on achievement and believe that they can provide all the children with basal materials that are appropriate for their reading

levels; however, Burns, Roe, and Ross (1992) suggests that the match of materials with children is not always good. In a study of teachers' use of basal manuals, Durkin (1984) found that teachers tended not to use the recommended prereading activities but did use the postreading activities. They spent little time on developing the new vocabulary, building background, and providing prereading questions by spending more time on comprehension assessment questions and written practice assignments. Teachers used the phonics instructional goals, but did not follow suggested instructional procedures. Teachers did use suggested written practice exercises.

Some educators have expressed concern that teachers do not allow students to do a sufficient amount of contextual reading. Gambrell (1984) studied the average amounts of time spent on silent and oral contextual reading experiences during teacher-directed reading instruction in grades one through three. A child read silently for about two minutes and orally for about one minute during a thirty-minute lesson in first grade; silently for about four minutes and orally for about one-fourth minute during a twenty-nine minute lesson in second grade; and silently for about five and one-half minutes and orally for about one-fourth minute during a twenty-three minute lesson in third grade.

Educators have expressed considerable concern about the misuse of basal reader workbooks. Workbook activities should always be purposeful, and teachers should never assign workbook pages simply to keep students occupied. Teachers should also grade and return completed workbook assignments promptly since children need to have correct responses reinforced immediately and need to be informed about incorrect responses so that they will not continue to practice them explains Burns, Roe, and Ross (1992).

Schacter (1981) has suggested ways in which teachers can increase the effectiveness of their use of workbooks: First, teachers should decide to use the pages to provide children with appropriate practice needed to master a skill previously taught and second, to provide successful experiences. When a spoken response is required, the teacher asks the question and then calls on

a specific child to answer. At times, the teacher may wish to do an exercise with the children to be sure they complete it successfully. Some children may need more practice than others, which they can get without extra pages if the teacher offers multiple practice for each item on one page: for example, first the teacher might read, then have students underline, and then ask students to read.

Ekwall and Shanker (1985) summarized the strengths and weaknesses of the basal approach. They listed eleven strengths:

1. Basal readers provide a comprehensive program with numerous materials.
2. Basal readers provide sequential, systematic presentation of vocabulary, decoding, comprehension, and study skills.
3. Basal readers provide for a systematic review of skills as students progress through the program.
4. Controlled vocabulary in the early stages helps students achieve initial success with decoding.
5. A system for placing students and evaluating their progress is included.
6. Workbooks and other reinforcement materials are included to aid the teacher in planning out instruction.
7. The teacher's manuals provide daily lesson plans and a wealth of other instructional resources.
8. Basal readers are designed for small-group instruction.
9. The programs are written by reading experts.
10. Basal readers are attractive and carefully packaged.
11. Basal readers provide a variety of literary forms carefully selected from outstanding children's literature (p.45).

The nine weaknesses are as follows:

1. Vocabulary may be either be too restricted or not restricted enough. Ranges in readability increase as levels become more difficult.

2. Language patterns of basal stories at the earliest levels may not match children's oral language.

3. The variety and number of selections cannot be as great as those found in actual trade books.

4. The systematic, sequential approach to skill development is considered inappropriate by some.

5. The structured nature of basal programs may decrease individualized instruction and limit teachers' choices.

6. Basal programs tend to be less effective for both the very able and the slowest readers.

7. Teacher's manuals may contain too much information requiring the teacher to determine which parts of the lesson are essential and which are supplementary.

8. Workbook materials can be misused because there are so many inappropriate pages.

9. Basal selections have been criticized for inadequate or inappropriate portrayal of ethnic and racial minorities, women, and the handicapped (p.45).

A study done by Miller and Blumenfield (1993) examined whether the teacher-guided and student independent practice and evaluation tasks recommended in basal teacher's manuals are designed to promote the application of two reading comprehension skills, main idea and cause-effect. Results indicated that recommended reading tasks lacked the characteristics likely to foster this expertise. It was noted, however, that this study's conclusions are based on only two comprehension skills and in two basal series. Opportunities for guided and independent practice with the two selected reading skills were not sequenced according to research-based

recommendations that more practice should be provided when skills are first introduced or reintroduced. Practice opportunities in these basals appeared primarily in lessons after which these skills were tested. There was consistency in each of the series as to how practice tasks were sequenced. Neither series assessed skills at the highest cognitive level. In both basals students were expected to complete cognitively simple tasks both during independent practice and during guided practice. Thus, none of the basal assessment items actually determined whether students could apply reading skills to complex texts.

A study done on Pedagogical Dependency by Barksdale-Ladd and Thomas (1993) concludes that basal programs primarily satisfied lower level security needs for students, teachers, and other stakeholders, but recommends that teachers use classroom reading programs that focus on meeting or developing the higher level needs of self-actualization, knowing and understanding the world, and the pleasure of reading. These researchers felt that equal amounts of time involving children in activities that meet higher- and lower-level needs should be spent by teachers at all grade levels. Meeting higher-level needs involves assisting students in developing good mental health, self-reliance, and intrinsic motivation for learning and discovery. Research done by Dale and Radell (1995) has shown that the type of instruction children receive will influence their attitude toward reading and writing. Shapiro (1992) found that elementary children who receive basal reader instruction had less positive attitudes toward reading than their counterparts in whole language type programs. Barnett and Irwin (1994) found that children in traditional classrooms liked to read less. On the other hand, students that read trade books and didn't have to complete worksheets for reading liked to read more. Studies seem to show that children have better attitudes toward reading depending on the method of instruction used.

The Reading Renaissance Approach

The specific objectives of Reading Renaissance include the following: 1) to improve reading comprehension as measured by norm-referenced reading comprehension tests; 2) to

develop independent, self-directed readers and learners; 3) to contribute to the development of critical and inferential thinking skills; and 4) to make reading fun and help students develop a lifelong love of reading according to the Institute for Academic Excellence (1995). Accelerated Reader is the most widely used reading management software in the country and is used in more than 14,000 schools coast to coast. Accelerated Reader was created by Judi Paul and is marketed by Advantage Learning Systems, Inc. which was founded by Judi and her husband, Terry Paul. Originally used as an independent reading supplement in the middle grades, Accelerated Reader was expanded in many schools to become a core element of the reading program from kindergarten to the upper grades. Reading Renaissance supplements the Accelerated Reader reading practice and management system, motivating students to new levels of reading achievement. The Reading Renaissance approach aims to greatly expand the amount of reading time devoted to three vital activities: reading to children, reading with children in structured ways, and requiring children to read independently (Sustained Silent Reading or SSR). Reading Renaissance makes reading fun. While they are having fun, students may not notice the gradual and continual development of their reading fluency and comprehension. Along with reading comes the development of higher order thinking skills. Reading may perhaps be the only way to reinforce such skills in the classroom.

Children learn to value and enjoy reading by observing role models. Trelease (1996) stresses five reasons why the reading aloud practice should be adopted by teachers and done on a daily basis. First, study after study shows that reading aloud to children improves their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and best of all, their attitudes about reading. It teaches them to want to read, a foundation on which to build lifetime readers. Second, children listen on a higher level than they read. Most children's reading levels do not catch up to their listening levels until eighth grade. Because of this, it is important for both parents and teachers to continue to read aloud even after a child knows how to read on his or her own. It is best to read aloud on a higher

level than the child's reading ability. Third, reading aloud to children builds comprehension because listening comprehension almost always precedes reading comprehension. Fourth, reading aloud is a commercial for reading. Every time we read to a child, we are sending a pleasure message to the child's brain, conditioning him or her to associate books and print with pleasure. Teachers and parents must not cut their reading advertising budget as children get older. Finally, reading is an accrued skill. The more children read, the better they get at it. By reading aloud, you are modeling this skill for them. The best readers are those children who have been read to most often by their parents and their teachers. In *Becoming a Nation of Readers(1985)*, the Commission on Reading affirms, "The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children....It is a practice that should continue throughout the grades" (p.51). Carbo (1996) suggests that you read aloud to your students for at least 15 minutes daily. Carbo encourages the practice of providing books on tape that allow students to listen and follow along. Textbooks and stories might also be recorded for those students who are still nonfluent readers. Teachers should see reading to children as a continuing opportunity to extend children's horizons about books and to stimulate a desire to be a reader according to Mooney (1988). Reading aloud challenging material and raising thought-provoking questions stretch students' abilities as higher-level thinking is modeled by showing students how to think out loud about questions relating to something that has been read.

In activities which involve being read with, children begin to learn letter sounds, whole words, and sentence structure; and these activities might include such practices as echo reading and repeated reading. Reading Renaissance incorporates the use of Duolog Reading, a form of paired reading which combines the most effective practices of tutor-assisted reading practices with the motivation and management features of Accelerated Reader. Neville (1968) noted that listening to a reading or recording of text while following it visually helped to increase fluency. Simultaneous reading and listening frees the reader from a preoccupation with laborious decoding

and enables other reading strategies to come into play.

Motivation is important in reading development. The joy of reading is something each student needs to discover for herself/himself, and this discovery can only be made by reading. The challenge for the teacher is to find effective external motivations for the student to read good literature and to continue practicing reading skills until reading becomes effortless and automatic. As the student approaches reading automaticity, the requirement for extrinsic motivators declines as intrinsic motivators (the enjoyment of the story, the sense of achievement that comes from completing a challenging book) increase. Once the student achieves automaticity, the relevance of extrinsic motivators dwindles. Gambrell's (1996) research suggests that classrooms that foster reading motivation are characterized by a teacher who is a reading model, a book-rich classroom environment, opportunities for choice, familiarity with books, social interaction about books, and literacy-related incentives that reflect the value of reading. Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1988), Taylor, Frye, and Maruyama (1990), and Morrow (1992) all contend that children who are motivated and who spend more time reading are better readers.

The theory of reading practice suggests the reason why Sustained Silent Reading is an effective instructional tool is that practice makes perfect. The more a student reads the better he or she reads. Carbo (1996) indicates good readers spend time practicing reading high interest reading materials. Silent reading as a part of the school's literacy development allows the benefits of individualization. Silent reading allows each individual the personal and optimal practice time for his or her own most effective reading development. Galda and Cullinan (1991) suggest that the optimal context for independent silent reading practice may be one in which practice is preceded by short bursts of instruction for those who need it with reading materials appropriate to the individual student, and is monitored to insure that students are engaged in the activity during the time allotted, accompanied by shared activities to talk about or respond to what is read.

Sustained silent reading is an important means of engaging children in reading and requires a regularly scheduled time for children to read self-selected literature without interruption. Its purpose is to promote independent reading and to provide opportunities to extend reading skills through practice. Harms and Lettow (1986) recommend a set time every day when children can read literature they have chosen because owning the reading experience is creating meaning, a process that is influenced by an individual's unique collection of past experiences, stage of intellectual development, and purpose for reading a piece or genre. Hilbert (1992) contends that when SSR is managed strategically and carefully orchestrated to foster student interaction, readers of all ability levels benefit and learn to recognize the intrinsic value of reading widely. A time to share books read is important as students get to hear their peers' enthusiasm expressed during the retelling or summarizing of books read. Wide reading and shared discussion are important factors in building reading comprehension and are the basis of Reading Renaissance.

Less able readers become familiar with the vocabulary and plot of books which enable them to read the books with greater ease and comprehension. During book sharing, students must describe parts of books not yet mentioned in any previous retelling. This requires students to read with distinctive and extraordinary involvement. Calkins (1997) thinks children grow as readers when they work together to explore hunches they have about literature. She suggests three strategies to help students become strategic readers: brainstorm ways to read difficult texts; explore layers of meaning in easier texts; and reread and rethink together with a partner.

Gambrell (1996) describes an engaged reader as motivated, knowledgeable, strategic, and socially interactive. A motivated reader chooses to read for a variety of purposes, such as "gaining new knowledge, escaping into the literary world of text, and learning how to perform a task" (p.15). The engaged reader is able to use information gained from previous experiences to construct new understandings from text; to acquire knowledge from text; and to apply knowledge

gained from text reading in a variety of personal, intellectual, and social contexts and is therefore knowledgeable. When the engaged reader is strategic, he or she is employing cognitive strategies to decode, interpret, comprehend, monitor, and regulate the reading process so that the goals and purposes of reading are satisfied. Finally, the engaged reader is socially interactive, able to share and communicate with others in the process of constructing and extending the meaning of text. Reading Renaissance liberates students to proceed at their natural level of development and frees the teacher to manage an individualized program easily. Reading Renaissance helps the slower reader catch up and feel a sense of achievement and team spirit with the rest of the class. In his book, *The Power of Reading*, Stephen Krashen (1993) contends, "When children read for pleasure, when they get 'hooked on books,' they acquire, involuntarily and without conscious effort, nearly all of the so-called 'language skills' many people are so concerned about. They will become adequate readers, acquire a large vocabulary, develop the ability to understand and use complex grammatical constructions, and develop a good writing style....Without [free voluntary reading], I suspect that children simply do not have a chance" (p.448). Literature-based reading builds both reading skills and cognitive thinking skills. Skill-building and critical thinking naturally develop during contextualized reading experiences. Intensive, individualized reading will develop and improve all of the language skills including inferential and critical reasoning abilities. Literature-based reading leads to a lifelong love of reading. Krashen (1993) says, "Through literature, students will grow intellectually and be exposed to a wider variety of books, which can stimulate more free reading. In fact, one of the ways we know that a literature program is effective is if it results in more free voluntary readings. In turn, free voluntary reading will help build language competences and contribute to intellectual growth, which will make literature more comprehensible and meaningful" (p.460). Literature-based reading emphasizes reading as language practice, while at the same time develops phonetic and comprehension skills through reading within context. Literature-based reading is the cornerstone of a child's reading

development. Literature-based independent reading exemplifies the type of dynamics that Vygotsky (1962) describes as being most closely related to language development in children. The narrative form, story telling and story-making, is at the very core of the human experience. The primary social experience in literature-based reading is the relationship that a book establishes between the child and the author. Literature-based reading instills in students the desire to read more. Willinsky (1990) remarks, "Send those literate divers after their own treasures; upon returning to the surface with their finds, allow them to share their findings with others"(p.71-72). Reading becomes the experience of discovery, of uncovering the layers of meaning in texts, and relating the meaning to others. Indrisano and Parafore (1992) stress that the teaching of reading is best accomplished through the use of quality, children's trade books.

Reading Renaissance advocates short, focused mini-lessons for enhancing higher order thinking skills with those students who may need them. An extensive body of research done by Rosenshine and Stevens (1984), Evans and Carr (1985), Duffy, Roehler, and Putnam (1987), and Adams (1990) indicates that clearly defined objectives and teacher-directed instruction are characteristic of effective reading programs. This research shows learning is more likely to occur if students know what the learning tasks are and if teachers specifically teach them. Systematic instruction is based on an identified scope of goals and objectives, and activities are designed and carried out specifically to meet those goals. Whole language proponents advocate the use of mini-lessons as described by Atwell (1987). With systematic instruction, teachers need not rely on teachable moments only, but realize that both planned and unplanned instruction are needed if, according to Durkin (1990), the reading ability of every student is to be maximally advanced. Spiegel (1992) states that direct instruction has been traditionally equated with "skilling and drilling," but direct instruction at its best teaches strategies, not skills." These strategies, claims Duffy and Roehler (1987), provide children with a repertoire to meet reading needs. Direct instruction involves describing to learners situations in which a strategy might be needed,

modeling how to select from alternatives which strategy to use, and modeling how one should think when using a particular strategy. Yatvin (1991) summarizes the role of direct instruction as a teacher's job to support inductive learning by focusing children's attention on significant features of language and helping children work through the language problems they need to solve in order to achieve their purposes with language. Atwell's mini-lessons come dangerously close to what Durkin (1990) called "mentioning" during which students learn only enough to be able to do the task at hand. Systematic direct instruction has as one of its goals that "learners learn from the lesson and the job is not considered complete until transfer has occurred, that is, until the students can use the strategy with new authentic materials for authentic purposes....Bridges can and must be built between whole language and more traditional approaches to literacy instruction to enable teachers to blend the best of both in order to help every child reach his or her full literacy potential" affirms Spiegel (1992, p.38-44). Systematic direct instruction and many aspects of whole language can be blended in ways that strengthen both approaches. Literacy educators will benefit children more if they look for points of compromise and opportunities to blend the best of both viewpoints rather than looking for and stressing the conflicts that exist between the two. Transactional strategies instruction combines the benefits of whole language instruction--it helps increase reading comprehension--and it improves word attack skills, which is a concern in traditional instruction. Children may be taught to make predictions; to relate the text to prior knowledge; to ask questions about information; to seek clarification when meaning is unclear; to visualize the meaning; and to summarize along the way. Ultimately, children internalize the comprehension and word attack strategies, and active strategic reading becomes a habit.

Terry Paul conducted the two largest studies ever produced on literature-based reading. Paul's 1992 National Reading Study established a significant correlation between the amount of literature-based reading students did and their growth in reading ability as measured by

standardized reading tests. The study showed that students six to nine years of age who started at a low reading ability improved 2.13 grade levels for every 100 points of literature-based read--more than two years of growth in the space of one school year. The 1993 study both confirmed the findings of the first study and demonstrated a further correlation between reading and math scores. Paul was convinced from these findings that the primary task in attempting to foster development of reading ability is to motivate students to practice reading says the Institute (1995). Reading Renaissance treats reading as a social skill in which shared experiences along with extensive modeling and one-on-one coaching techniques play a vital part. Reading aloud to and reading together with students are two of the most effective ways to develop reading as a social experience in school.

Lev Vygotsky (1962), a Russian psychologist put forth two novel concepts for language acquisition: the concept of "inner speech" and the idea of the zone of proximal development. Inner speech refers to the ability that develops in a young child between the ages of two and four by which the child begins to reflect on experience words inside his/her brain. Recent research has focused on Vygotsky's other theory, his zone of proximal development, and its significance for children's language learning. Vygotsky found that all people have a "language ceiling" or a limit to their language learning capacity. If you know approximately what someone's limit is, then, immediately below that limit you would find a zone of language development, the zone of proximal development, which is the best zone for language learning. It is in this zone that the child can learn new words and phrases best when coached by a knowledgeable helper or assistant. Vygotsky offered two thoughts about education: children acquire language through social interaction; and that in a child's individual zone of proximal development, language is best learned through one-on-one coaching from an accomplished peer or an adult. Bandura and Walters (1963) in their classic book, *Social Learning and Personality Development*, emphasized the importance of observational learning, or modeling, and that a good deal of learning occurs through vicarious

rather than personal experience. We observe the behaviors of others, observe the consequences, and later imitate that behavior. Two conclusions found in these studies are that children are more prone to imitate a model whose behaviors are reinforced and that children are more likely to imitate when they themselves are reinforced for their imitations.

Reading Renaissance follows the tradition of the Accelerated Reader, incorporating a philosophy that the best way to improve classroom learning is to empower the teacher with tools and techniques that make the job of teaching more efficient and more effective. While many computer learning programs attempt to replace the teacher, in Reading Renaissance, the teacher plays the key role as Accelerated Reader becomes a tool that permits the effective tracking of individual student progress, the identification of student difficulties, and the development of appropriate intervention strategies. Reading Renaissance, through its use of the Accelerated Reader, is one of the few comprehension programs that bring the computer's efficiency to the aid of teachers. Reading Renaissance puts a school's investment in computer technology to effective use. Kinzer and Leu (1997) maintain that "As we look at the technologies that surround us, it is important to consider the challenges we face because of the new tools that are afforded us. We believe these new tools will increase, not decrease, the teacher's central role in orchestrating learning experiences. We will be challenged to thoughtfully guide students' learning within electronic information environments that are more complexly networked than traditional print media, presenting potentially richer and more integrated learning opportunities for both teachers and students" (p.136).

Conclusion

Recently publishers have moved toward making their basal textbooks more literature-based, however, the variety and number of literature selections supplied in a basal series cannot be compared to the number of actual trade books that are available for young readers today. Quite often, a basal series limits and restricts teachers as so much of the information found in

teachers' manuals require teachers to determine what is essential and what is supplemental and many teachers spend so much time covering the publishers' suggested activities that little time is left for children to do little, if any, actual reading at all. Despite that fact, the comprehensive package which is included with basal reader series is still desired by some educators as the most desirable way to teach children to read. Though proponents of basal reader series feel its strengths outweigh its weaknesses, many educators today look toward a program which offers a more balanced approach.

Reading Renaissance is a more balanced, literature-based approach for teaching reading to young children. Reading Renaissance directly involves children in the reading process. Children are read to, read with, and strongly encouraged to read independently on a daily basis for extended periods of time. Reading Renaissance involves the use of the mini-lesson which assures the teaching of reading skills without the drill, but with application as each skill taught is practiced in the independent reading done by the child as well as practiced and modeled when the child is being read to or is being read with. The role of the teacher as a model is critical as good reading and enthusiasm for reading is modeled. Reading then becomes a desired social skill that is crucial to the development of independent, self-directed readers and learners of the language arts--reading, speaking, listening, and writing as well as the development of a positive attitude about reading. Reading aloud to and with children stretch their abilities when higher-level thinking is modeled as the teacher demonstrates how to think out loud about what has been read. Reading Renaissance allows children to practice reading skills as they read self-selected trade books rather than forces children to read selections that have been selected by a publishing company. The Reading Renaissance program allows teachers to track student progress through the use of the electronics technology that is available in most classrooms today which encourages and promotes reading at each child's individual level and helps each child to see growth and progress as it is being made.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Presently, more than any time in the history of education in America, teachers are better qualified and more resources are available to assure the success of students. Our society has become a changing, technological one which requires our students to be prepared to meet the challenges which will confront them in the future. Despite the technical revolution in which we now live, literacy still has a special role to play as we work to maintain our society as the great part of civilization that it is. Reading Renaissance embraces that technology through its use of the Accelerated Reader software which encourages wide reading and shared discussion of student selected literature. This, in turn, provides for today's students a framework for becoming skilled, fluent, lifelong readers who possess not only an interest in books, but a desire to read, and the ability to read and comprehend written text.

In light of this, this study was conducted to investigate the differences of third grade students' reading achievement who have experienced the Reading Renaissance approach to reading as compared to third grade students who have received the traditional basal textbook approach to reading instruction. It was planned that the results of this study be made available to the principal of the elementary school in which the study was completed for her information only.

Population

The population consisted of 253 third grade students in a Middle Georgia Public School. The school is located in a small town community. Racially, the population of the total school was approximately 66% white, 33% black, and 1% other. The gender distribution of the entire school included 51% females and 49% males. The third grade represented approximately 33% of the total school. The socioeconomic background of the student population was generally middle class.

Sample

The sample used in the investigation was drawn from in-tact groups of randomly selected third graders that were heterogeneously grouped and assigned to 11 third grade teachers. The sample was drawn before the school year began by the school counselor and were selected by the assistant principal according to those teachers who had the most experience teaching reading traditionally and those teachers who had the most experience using the Reading Renaissance approach.

Instrument

According to the Buros Eleventh Mental Measurement Yearbook (1992), most of the equivalent forms reliability coefficients for the Iowa Test of Basic Skills range for .70-.90. The exceptions are the coefficients for the Listening Test which range from .494-.695. With the Listening Test again being the exception, the internal-consistency reliability (Kuder-Richardson Formula 20) coefficients are above .85. The content validity, based on the study of Detailed Skills Objectives With Item Norms and Teacher's Guides, was stated by the reviewer as being excellent.

Tasks and Materials

During the study the control group was exposed to the traditional approach which was the usual form of reading instruction using a previously adopted basal text according to the curriculum. The experimental group was exposed to the Reading Renaissance approach for the teaching of reading which incorporated mini skills lessons; reading to children, reading with children, and children reading independently trade books and testing using the Accelerated Reader software as the basis of its instructional method. In March of 1997 the Iowa Test of Basic Skills was administered to both groups.

Design

The design used in this study was post test control group design. This type of design is composed of two groups: one group, the experimental group, receives a treatment (X) while the second group, the control group, does not. The assignment of the sample to both groups is completed on a random basis. The treatment (X) consisted of using the Reading Renaissance approach to reading instruction as the primary form of reading instruction while the control group was exposed to the traditional basal textbook approach. The post test (O1, O2) consisted of the results of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in the spring of 1997.

The design used in this study can be displayed in the following true experimental design:

(R) X O1

(R) O2

where (R) represents the random selection of the sample which was done for the purpose of distributing students among the 11 third grade teachers at the time and not for the purpose of the study. (X) represents the treatment of reading instruction using Reading Renaissance, and O1 and O2 represent the post test (Iowa Test of Basic Skills, 1997).

Procedures

The researcher met with the principal and the assistant principal about a month prior to the beginning of the 1996-1997 school term to discuss the study and to obtain permission to conduct the study. After authorization to conduct the study was granted by the principal, the assistant principal selected the pairs of classes from the 11 third grade classes that had been previously randomly selected for heterogeneous grouping. Two veteran third grade teachers had taught reading previously using the Reading Renaissance approach. Their reading classes were selected for the experimental group. Two veteran third grade teachers who had always used the traditional approach to teaching reading had their classes selected for the control group. It was

decided by the assistant principal that neither of these in-tact groups would have knowledge of the study being done so as not to affect the outcome of the study results. With the beginning of the 1996-1997 school year, the study was underway. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills was administered in the spring and when the scores were returned to the school the data was analyzed.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Analysis

The researcher investigated the differences of third grade students' reading achievement who have experienced the Reading Renaissance instructional approach as compared to third grade students who have experienced a traditional basal textbook approach. After permission was granted by the Principal of the participating elementary school, the sample for the study was selected by the Assistant Principal of Curriculum based on the experience of the teachers using each approach from in-tact groups of randomly selected heterogeneously grouped third graders. The teachers selected had the most training and experience with the particular instructional approach they would be using for the 1996-1997 school year.

The students in the control group were exposed to the traditional basal textbook instructional approach for the 1996-1997 school year while the students in the experimental group were exposed to the Reading Renaissance instructional approach for the 1996-1997 school year. Both the control group and the experimental group were administered the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in March of 1997 as a post-test for the study.

Method of Data Analysis

A t-test is a statistical test that makes it possible to compare two means to determine the probability that the difference between the means is a real difference instead of a chance difference. In this study t-tests were performed to compare data from the control group's and the experimental group's post tests as well as data comparing reading achievement within the control group and within the experimental group. A Pearson Product Correlation two-tailed test was performed on the data from the control group post-tests to determine levels of significance for the correlation coefficients.

Analysis of Findings

A t-Test was performed to compare the differences between the control group's post test scores and the experimental group's post test scores. The results indicated a significant difference in the achievement of the control group and the achievement of the experimental group. See Table 1.

Table 1

Post test Scores for Control Group and Experimental Group

Statistic	Value
No. scores in Control Group	48
No. scores in Experimental Group	45
t-value	.026
Degrees of freedom	91
Level of significance	.026

Discussion of Findings

The hypothesis in this study was not supported by these results. These results suggest that the students who received the basal textbook approach to reading instruction achieved greater achievement than those students in the experimental group who received the Reading Renaissance approach to reading instruction as measured by the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the differences of third grade students' reading achievement who experienced the Reading Renaissance approach to reading instruction as compared to third grade students who experienced the traditional basal textbook approach to reading instruction. Subjects participating in the sample consisted of in-tact groups from a random selection of heterogeneously grouped third grade students. This study was conducted in a small southern town public school setting.

In order to conduct this study, the post test scores were taken from the total reading Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) scores for the 1996-1997 school term. During this school term, the control group was exposed to the traditional basal textbook approach to reading instruction and the experimental group was exposed to the Reading Renaissance approach to reading instruction.

Conclusions

The results of this study did not support the hypothesis. There was a significant difference in the reading achievement of those students who received the traditional basal textbook approach to reading instruction. The statistical analysis of the findings would clearly suggest that the traditional basal textbook approach produced more growth in reading achievement. The educational theory that students become better readers by reading was not confirmed in this study. However, it should be noted that the Accelerated Reader software and the reading of trade books was made available to students who received the traditional basal textbook approach for reading instruction as supplementary reading. It would, therefore, seem that the use of trade books and the incentives of Accelerated Reader points is an appropriate addition and supplement to the instruction of reading in any form as it allows and encourages

reading for the pure enjoyment of it and involves the practice that allows the skill of reading to become as perfect as it can be given the practice that takes place each time a book is successfully completed.

Implications

Due to the small size of this study, there is need for the study to be replicated in order for the findings to be applicable for instructional purposes. Because the sample was taken from already in-tact groups, the level of significance in the achievement of the control group is enough reason to stimulate further investigation into the differences in achievement of third grade students receiving traditional basal textbook instruction and those receiving the Reading Renaissance approach to reading instruction.

Future studies related to reading instruction might investigate the use of trade books as well as the length of instructional time spent teaching the actual reading skills measured on the ITBS and amount of time subjects spend reading aloud as a measure of oral reading fluency and comprehension. Repetitive research would be necessary to provide greater validity for the results to be more applicable to classroom instruction. Further research should include studies which investigate the degree of instructional time spent involved with the Reading Renaissance approach as compared to instructional time involved with the traditional basal textbook approach. The goal, of course, should be to determine what is the best approach to reading instruction that will insure all students are able to experience success and experience the satisfaction and pleasure that can be derived from the reading of the wonderful literature that is available to us today.

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